AN EVALUATIVE STUDY ON STUDENT'S SERVICE QUALITY PERCEPTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTES IN DELHI/NCR

SYNOPSIS

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Introduction

The primary goal of every business transaction is to satisfy the needs of its customers, and this need is met through the provision of a service. Customer satisfaction may be measured by how well a business delivers on its promises in terms of service quality (Kitchroen, 2004). The service sector is becoming important to the economies of many nations. Experts in the area believe that the interpretation of "excellent service" is a means to success in today's global competition. Service quality is the most influential viable trend now affecting business and promoting policy. Since 1980, there has been a connection between service quality and increased productivity, which has only strengthened over time. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (1996), the perceptible influence of service quality on profits and other economic consequences of the association is now an issue of utmost importance. As a result of these factors, it has become an issue of paramount importance to the scientific community and an unyielding strategic force. It's no secret that researchers and business owners alike are motivated to find more concrete ways of gauging service quality to better appreciate the significance of that quality, its effects on the customer experience, and the opportunities it presents for competitive advantage and customer retention. Successful businesses are under constant pressure to provide ever-improving levels of service, which increases the quality, quantity, and credibility of those services. For this reason, a lot of focus goes into establishing standards for evaluating service quality. Over the years, the education sector has relied heavily on the concept of quality service and how it relates to satisfaction, value construction, and assessment (Oldfield and Baron, 2000). As a result of the expansion of international education markets and the continuing downward trend in administrative finances, universities and colleges are under pressure to become more commercially viable in order to remain competitive in today's global economy. Private institutions of higher education had to worry not just about how society valued graduates' talents and abilities (Lawton, 1992), but also about how those graduates viewed their own teaching methods (Bemowski, 1991). Involve educational institutions in a continuous effort toward fulfilling and surpassing students' expectations if you want to see them thrive and survive (Anderson et al., 1994).

After a period of process control data kept by the industrial sector in the United States in the 1920s (Garvin, 1988), quality thinking and delivery may be traced back to that time period.

The two world wars contributed to the quality standards of products and processes. When standard production standards were introduced in the late 1950s, the concept of quality began to take root. As a result, a mindset of shared responsibility was formed among all personnel involved in creating a product that satisfied consumers (Garvin 1988, Juran 1988). Through this method, organisations could place an increased focus on quality as a critical element in strategically moving forward. In the 1980s, Hewlett-Packard questioned the quality of chips made in the United States, which sparked a debate over quality. Soon, Total Quality Management (TQM) was established as an essential quality manufacturing element. On the other hand, the Japanese are to be praised for instilling quality awareness into their work mentality at a period when the United States was still a long way from implementing TQM. Adopting TQM helped Japan's manufacturing sector grow and flourish in the 1980s and 1990s.

Firms are working hard to attain efficiency, technical superiority, innovation, creativity, and adaptability to maintain a competitive advantage and high quality and efficiency. In today's constantly changing business climate, the requirement for firms to be able to adapt is growing as well. Additionally, Durai (2000) stressed the importance of quality in the rural sector, stressing that the design requirements must be set according to minimal serviceability.

Despite the rising cost of higher education in India, customers are looking for better education at a higher price. As the demand for high-quality education rises, so do the expectations of prospective students. They expect their university of choice to have the best facilities, the most highly qualified and experienced faculty, and provide the best conditions for their academic and personal development. Higher education institutions (HEIs) are unusual in that their products and services are intertwined, making it necessary to investigate and select the most appropriate service quality characteristics for these institutions. Higher education in India, where there are now over 480 privately run institutions, is confronted with a wide range of issues. Alternatives include eliminating entrance hurdles for international institutions to open franchises in the United States as well as expanding educational opportunities to include distance learning for working students. IGNOU, the world's biggest open university, now serves more than 3 million students from 35 countries. With the advent of private institutions that have academic agreements with well-known international universities, India's higher education sector is further threatened. The number of people who want to go to school has grown so quickly that more educational institutions and service providers have started treating

students like customers and providing them with top-notch services. This has been spurred on by the lack of government support and the growing competition.

With such a complex scenario, increased student expectations, and a variety of institutional partnerships, today's higher education landscape is fiercely competitive. This scenario reveals it as a multifaceted system that promotes learning, discovery, outreach, and worldwide friendship and understanding. The term "higher education" has varying meanings depending on whether you ask a practitioner or an academic. More often, it refers to “the process of teaching and learning that occurs at institutions of higher education like colleges and universities”. Since the level of higher education in a nation determines the quality of its human capital, Colleges and universities must meet the needs of the business world in terms of what graduates should know and be able to do, as well as the needs of those who will soon be entering the workforce.

Background of Study

The service sector accounts for the majority of economic growth in India. As a service business, education has always played a critical role in the growth and development of society. It is the third-largest sector after banking and insurance, and after the financial sector. The various secondary and higher education levels significantly influence India's economy. Higher education has a greater influence on students' ability to build their careers and their knowledge base. A degree of education comes after a student has completed their secondary schooling. Undergraduate and graduate degree programmes and vocational and training programmes all fall under the umbrella of higher education. For many years, such organisations have given exams and diplomas for competent students.

India's state and central governments have a broad range of laws and techniques that allow educational institutions to deliver a wide range of services in various sectors. In the eyes of the government, education is critical for everyone on this planet to improve their level of living, develop their ability to work together to solve issues and overcome obstacles, find rewarding careers, and live their lives to the fullest as good and responsible citizens. This focus on lifelong learning has been a hallmark of education since the early 20th century, when education became more than just the acquisition of information. Students and other stakeholders increasingly

value classroom activities and extracurricular activities (ECAs) 5. As a result, students improve their abilities in the areas of leadership and management as well as communication, creativity, and critical thinking, all of which are necessary for success in the working world after graduation. Student happiness has become essential in higher education institutions as students pay higher tuition costs and increasingly see themselves as consumers.

For higher education, liberalisation, globalization, and privatisation (LPG) is a concept that is always evolving in terms of its goals, rules, and techniques in order to keep up with current trends in education. As the world moves towards the digital age, new and more cost-effective teaching and learning methods are becoming available to educators. Teachers' involvement is also critical to achieving improved levels of satisfaction with their connected colleges' educational institutions. Education institutions and colleges rely heavily on students as their primary clients. As a result, colleges must provide high-quality services and meet the requirements and expectations of their students in order to succeed in an increasingly competitive educational industry. A modified service quality (SERVQUAL) instrument will be used to measure five service quality components, including “tangibles, dependability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy”, in accordance with the recommendations of the Ramamurthy Committee. Gap analysis will be used in this study to figure out what students thought and expected about SERVQUAL at higher education institutions.

Higher Education in India

According to the worldwide definition of tertiary education (post-school), higher education has two stages. Those in higher education fall into two categories: type A and type B. (Further Education). Graduation from an accredited four-year college or university requires three to four years of full-time study. The term "higher education" refers to institutions of higher learning, such as a college or university. It provides a wide range of degrees, from high school diplomas and bachelor's degrees to master's and doctoral degrees. They are seen as symbols of specialised knowledge that is based on a wide range of skills all over the world.

India's post-secondary education system encompasses a wide range of subjects, including engineering and technology, medicine, agriculture, and so on and a wide range of professional streams. A bachelor's degree normally requires three years of college study after a high school diploma, which normally takes 12 years. Honours and specialised programmes are also offered in select locales. They aren't necessarily longer in terms of length, but they are more in-depth.

Agricultural, dental, engineering, pharmacy, and veterinary medicine bachelor's degrees often take four years to complete, whereas architecture and medical bachelor's degrees typically take five and a half years to complete. Education, journalism, and librarianship all have bachelor's degrees that are considered "secondary" degrees. This isn't the only way to get a bachelor's degree in law. You can also do a five-year integrated programme or a three-year programme as your second degree. “Typically, a master's degree takes two years to complete”. In order to pursue a doctorate, one must first get a master's degree. There are a variety of ways to approach this, from purely research-based to including coursework. M. Phil. and Ph.D. degrees are conferred two or three years apart. In order to get a Ph.D., students are required to produce a major thesis based on their own unique research.

Service quality in Higher education

Under intense demand, higher education is compelled to improve its value. Despite the emergence of a more qualified and experienced teaching community, the delivery of instruction has not been able to keep pace with the fast changes in instructional methodology. As of today, we are focusing on ongoing development that meets the student body's needs. In today's world, there is a lot more emphasis on quality and excellence, as well as access and equal distribution, and more knowledge in schools.

In the real world, infrastructure and educational institutions have skyrocketed due to efforts to make higher education more widely accessible. There is a big difference between what the stakeholders want and what is delivered in education, even though there has been a lot more technology.

Engineering, technology, management, and education have seen the most growth in India's higher education system. The decline in government funding for higher education and the restricted number of state-funded schools have sparked the nation's unparalleled proliferation of private universities. Private colleges and universities are seeing a surge in enrollments, which has led to a fierce rivalry for students and a broad range of options for students. There are high expectations for how well their education will help them be good at work and at home.

Despite the fact that private institutions have spent a lot of money on building infrastructure and facilities to attract students, it is clear that there is a huge disconnect between the

expectations of the institutions and those of the students, leading to a large number of open seats in the institutions.

Customers' expectations and perceptions were compared to determine the quality of service. The government's many regulating authorities are improving education in India at both the federal and state levels. There is still a long way to go before this industry reaches its full potential. Because of this, the education industry must undergo a paradigm change with the introduction of novel ideas in order to remain viable in a highly competitive market. Educational services need to be rethought in light of the changing needs and views of people all over the world and the growth of knowledge, the growing population, technological advancements, and the changing world as a whole.

“Service quality within the service sector has remained a complex concept. The high growth of the educational market has called for a comprehensive service quality measurement scale for higher education”. Prior studies have used HEdPERF mainly over SERVPERF and “the SERVQUAL to examine service quality in the Higher education institutes. Students and professors have different points of view regarding the quality of the higher education institution research. Various authors concluded that reputation was the dimension that revealed greater dissatisfaction among students and professors”.

Review of Literature

Defining the quality of service in the service industry has proven difficult. The industry's rapid expansion requires a comprehensive scale for gauging the quality of higher education services. Most previous research on service quality in universities has relied on HEdPERF rather than SERVPERF or SERVQUAL. Students and university teachers have differing opinions on how well such institutions do research. Several scholars came to the conclusion that "reputation" was the most telling indicator of student and faculty discontent.

SERVQUAL, SERVPERF, and HEdPERF

SERVQUAL is a term that refers to the gap between customer expectations and perceptions of service. Service Quality is a multidimensional research instrument that uses a total of 44 questions to evaluate service quality, with 22 questions measuring expectations and 22 parallel questions assessing performance, for a total of 44 questions. “The questionnaire's expectations

and perceptions components each include 22 questions, including 4 items to capture tangibles, 5 items to capture dependability, 4 items to capture responsiveness, 5 items to capture certainty, and 5 items to capture empathy". Despite the widespread use of the SERQUAL instrument, numerous academics have questioned the SERVQUAL models for a variety of reasons (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Brown, Churchill Jr. and Peter, 1993; Teas, 1993; Buttle, 1996). Critics such as Cronin Jr. and Taylor believed that the SERVQUAL expectation disconfirmation model, which compares customer expectations against customer perceptions, was not a reliable measure of service quality (Cronin & Taylor, 1992). Cronin and Taylor constructed the SERVPERF model after eliminating expectations and retaining only the performance questions as a measure of service quality. They expressed worries about the vagueness of the expectations construct and the length of the questionnaire, among other criticisms. In contrast to SERVQUAL's 44 items (22 expectations and 22 performance-related), their questionnaire only has 22 statements (performance-related). Servqual, according to certain critics, did not attract the motions of changing hopes (Buttle, 1996). Many people think that people's perceptions of quality may be based only on how well a service performs, and that a performance-based metric is to blame for the wide range in service quality.

Abdullah evaluated the three ratings to see "how well they predicted service quality level, maybe for the first time in a higher education environment". In terms of describing differences in service quality levels, the six-factor structure of HEdPERF significantly outperformed the SERVPERF and SERVQUAL models (Abdullah, 2006). Brochado analysed the performance of several service quality measures in the higher education sector and determined that SERVPERF and HEdPERF had the best measuring capabilities, but the findings were equivocal in terms of reliability and consistency (Brochado, 2009). Finally, the HEdPERF and SERVPERF scales are thought to be good ways to measure service quality in higher education.

Service quality in the Indian higher education sector

"The effect of student perceived service quality on student happiness, loyalty, and motivation in Indian universities: the development of HiEduQual" was studied by Subrahmanyam A. et al. (2016.)This research tried to create and test HiEduQual, a service quality instrument used to assess students' perceptions of service quality in higher education institutions. "The primary goal of this research was to build a structural model based on theoretical and empirical data on the linkages between students' perceived service quality (SPSQ), satisfaction (SSt), loyalty

(SL), and motivation (M)". For HiEduQual, the research found a model with six structured dimensions and 23 components. It showed that students' perceptions of service quality directly impacted satisfaction, loyalty, and motivation. The research also found that student satisfaction partially and fully mediate between "students' perceptions of service quality, loyalty, and the incentive to use university services". According to the findings, the quality of academic and non-academic services has a critical influence on inspiring students to improve their academic performance.

Ranjith P. V. and Swati K. (2018) investigated components of the teaching-learning process and the significance that students put on them in their research paper titled "Students' Perception and Satisfaction with the Teaching-Learning Process of a Business School in the City of Mumbai." This research aimed to determine the significance of students' perceptions and satisfaction with the quality of B-school teaching processes in Mumbai. The research revealed information on the teaching-learning process' quality. The research focused on the most significant parameters of teaching quality: knowledge, inventiveness, and understanding, as well as students' perceptions of them. According to the study, business schools should enhance their delivery approach.

In their study, "Revisiting Perceived Service Quality in Management Education," ALfy and Abdulai (2020). According to the author, one of the most critical concerns around the globe is the quality of service in education and its forefathers. Service quality has become an important field of research owing to its dynamic and contextual character, despite decades of study. The major goal of the study was to decipher the dimensions that make up service quality from the perspective of management students and university employees to get a better understanding of the fundamental components of service quality when marketing and education are taken into account. Relevant ideas and concepts were included in the study of student perceptions of education, and in-depth interviews with students and staff were conducted for data collection. The data from the interviews was evaluated. A conceptual model was created to describe the apparent link between the study's variables. Qualitative data analysis identified academic services, educational facilities, administrative services, and student service roles as four categories of service quality based on qualitative data analysis. Furthermore, it was discovered that performance had an impact on the square. Findings from the Study Educational administrators and academic specialists can come up with innovative approaches to enhance student service responsibilities and make them an intrinsic element of service quality. A

systematic examination of the integrated educational environment in the context of providing quality assurance in education might be employed for this aim. The author thinks that education managers who are in charge of improving service quality in order to improve their schools' performance will find this study useful.

The research conducted by Rajput, Sneha, et al. (2020) aimed to determine the impact of service quality variables on student satisfaction. Student satisfaction was shown to be significantly affected by all of the measurable aspects of service quality (tangibility, dependability, responsiveness, and empathy), with the exception of assurance. The research also found a robust relationship between all of the study's independent factors.

Faustina Twum and Williams Peprah (2020) conducted a survey of Valley View University business students to gauge their opinion of the school's support services. The survey found that although the School of Business students were highly satisfied with the service's certainty, tangibles, and responsiveness, they were only somewhat satisfied with the empathy they received. Evidence has also shown that customer happiness is based on five aspects of service quality: assurance, tangibility, responsiveness, reliability, and empathy.

The impact of service quality on students' happiness was the subject of empirical research by Sohail and Hasan (2021). Two hundred and seventy-nine undergraduates from Saudi Arabia's public and private higher education institutions completed the SERVPERF survey. Based on the data, it seems that four out of the five characteristics of service quality significantly influenced the level of satisfaction among the students. There was no correlation between empathising with students and their happiness.

Problem Statement

“For HEIs to remain relevant to this commercial competition era, customer-orientation is most desired. Students are considered as the most essential component in quantifying quality in higher education (Athiyaman, A. (1997). Students serve as brand ambassadors, projecting the quality of an institution to the society. The concept of consumerism, customization and customer satisfaction influence higher education, and therefore higher educational institutions have no option but to accept students as customers. Hence, it is meaningful to consider students as brand ambassadors for knowing about service quality in higher educational institutions”.

This study focuses on students' perceived service quality dimensions leading to their satisfaction because these constructs play a significant role in churning out graduates who are potential leaders and eventually build the human capital and contribute to its socio- economic development.

In this regard, this study basically intends "to investigate the contribution of specific dimensions of HEdPERF (Higher Education PERFormance) in improving students' satisfaction".

Objectives

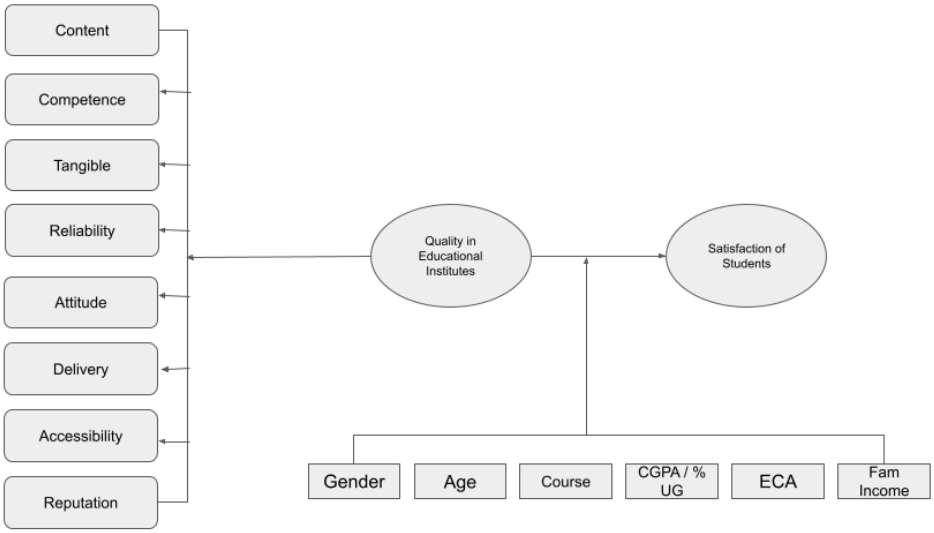
1	"To identify the demographic profile of the students in the higher educational institutes in Delhi/NCR.
2	To identify and validate the components/parameters affecting the quality of the higher educational institutes
3	To relatively examine the impact of the quality parameters on student's satisfaction.
4	To identify the differences in the student's perception w.r.t. the quality education imparted in the higher educational institutes .
5	To propose a model integrating students' perceived quality and their satisfaction in case of the higher educational institutes in Delhi/NCR".

Hypothesis of Study

	Hypotheses
1	"There is a significant relationship between content and student satisfaction.
2	There is a significant relationship between competence and student satisfaction.
3	There is a significant relationship between tangibles and student satisfaction.
4	There is a significant relationship between reliability and student satisfaction.
5	There is a significant relationship between attitude and student

	satisfaction.
6	There is a significant relationship between delivery and student satisfaction.
7	There is a significant relationship between accessibility and student satisfaction.
8	There is a significant relationship between reputation and student satisfaction.
9	There is a significant association between demographics of the students and service quality perceptions in HEIs".

Conceptual Model



Intended methodology

Research designed assisted by an interpretive model, the proposed work would rely on a mixed methodology. This is considered to be a valuable strategy, since at the preliminary stages of growth, the subject under-investigated. As a consequence, this theme is well adapted for an exploratory strategy led by a survey focused on the questionnaire, augmented by qualitative methods. The approach adopted is an empirical review. The data subjected to the survey contains the attitudes, beliefs, thoughts and insights from the events and experiences that are expressed by participants. They are qualitative or quantitative.

All of the primary data will be gathered using a well-structured questionnaire with a number of statements, to which respondents will be asked to respond on a 5-point Likert scale, where 5 and 1 denote strongly agreeing and disagreeing. A custom-made questionnaire will be implemented for approximately 400 students.

Sample Size

DATA COLLECTION : Primary & Secondary Sources

"Yamane formula for sample size.

$n=N/(1+Ne2)$

Where

n= corrected sample size, N = population size, and e = Margin of error (MoE), e = 0.05"

5000/(1+5000(.052)

= 370.37 ~ 371

So sample size for our study would be 371 or above.

For our study, a sample size of at least 371 people would be necessary. Thus we have taken sample size of 400".

Questionnaire/Instrument Development

In this study, we will use the scale of Abdullah, F. (2005) who developed "HEdPERF (Higher Education PERFormance) out of the SERVPERF model. The main purpose of HEdPERF scale was to measure service quality specifically in the higher education sector to understand students' points of view to improve educational service delivery".

Analysis, sampling and envisioned tools

"Convenience sampling is one among the non-probability sampling methods, in which we choose the sample units from the population, depending upon criteria like willingness to participate, accessibility and proximity. In other words, convenience sampling is conducting studies on those units of the population, which are easily available to the researcher. It has been a reliable technique for social empirical researchers since so long. Still there is limited reviews about convenience sampling and how to put it to the best use yet. We will chose this sampling method, as the population is large or not well defined and when randomization is not possible. It also becomes appropriate when the available probability sampling methods are cost-prohibitive and time consuming".

Primary data will be obtained by by the researcher himself with the structured interview schedule developed for the study. The interview schedule is constructed for the 400 students at UG and PG level in universities in Delhi/NCR listed in AICTE site so as to collect information in line with the objectives of the study.

Quantitative data will be analysed using "SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science), as it has an extensive toolkit of useful tables and graphical representations that help visualise the main tendencies in terms of average, standard deviation, normal U-shape distribution or kurtosis, as well as other descriptive statistics that can facilitate the transition towards inferential statistical tests".

The analysis is to acquire useful information for addressing study objectives by using statistical tools

- "Simple percentage model
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis(CFA)
- Exploratory Factor Analysis(EFA)
- Regression and Correlation Analysis"

Tentative Chapterization

Chapter One —Introduction will outlines the meaning of services and education, overview of Higher Education and institutes, service quality, learning and development, significance of research, aim and objectives of research and thesis layout.

Chapter Two —Review of Literature will highlight literature on Service Quality Dimensions and measurement, quality issues and perspectives in Higher Education Institutes, Perspectives and quality Issues in Management Education, and Research Gaps.

Chapter Three titled —Research Methodology will comprise Research Design, Scope of the Research, Sampling Design, Data Collection Design, Conceptual Framework, Research Questions and Hypotheses, Validity, Reliability and Limitations of Research.

Chapter Four —Data Analysis and Interpretation. This chapter will deal with analysing and discussing data about survey administered to respondents.

Chapter Five —Recommendations and Conclusion will presents the summary of findings, recommendations and conclusion for fostering excellent service quality in Management education institutions.

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